

“Diyandi” Festival as Pedagogical Archive and Global Cultural Text

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Abstract:

The “Diyandi” Festival of Iligan City, Philippines, is presented as more than a cultural performance. It is a living text that embodies identity, resilience, and pedagogy. Festivals are often described as tourist attractions or remnants of colonial heritage, but “Diyandi” reveals their deeper role as archives of values that continue to guide communities in the present. By engaging with “Diyandi” as a cultural text, this essay affirms that culture itself can serve as curriculum, offering lessons that extend beyond the classroom into the lived experiences of people. Institutions such as St. Michael’s College of Iligan (SMCII) are entrusted with the responsibility to interpret, preserve, and transmit this wisdom to future generations, ensuring that education remains rooted in local traditions and community voices. This perspective also advances the work of decolonization by challenging frameworks that privilege external narratives over indigenous knowledge. Recognizing “Diyandi” as a source of instruction highlights the importance of valuing local practices as legitimate forms of knowledge production. In doing so, the essay underscores that festivals are not static relics but dynamic expressions of cultural continuity, resilience, and pedagogy that shape both identity and community life.

Keywords: culture, curriculum, decolonization, festival, identity



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The Diyandi Festival of Iligan City, Philippines, merits serious attention because it is more than a cultural performance—it is a living repository of meaning that shapes identity, resilience, and pedagogy. While festivals are often reduced to tourism spectacles or colonial remnants, Diyandi demonstrates their deeper role as living texts, archives of values that continue to guide communities today. To engage with Diyandi in this way is to affirm that culture itself can function as curriculum, with institutions such as St. Michael's College of Iligan (SMCII) carrying the responsibility to help interpret, preserve, and transmit this wisdom to future generations in both academic and cultural life.

The need for such idea arises from the tension between tradition and modernity. As Eslit (2024) reminds us, Filipino identity exists within a continuum that balances heritage and change in a globalized, post-pandemic world. Diyandi exemplifies this balance, preserving ritual devotion while adapting to Iligan's urban realities. Gloria (2024) further frames Diyandi as a site of *divergence, convergence, and inclusion*, showing how it negotiates diverse identities and fosters solidarity. To capture these dynamics in writing is to safeguard them against reduction into mere entertainment. As Scripture counsels, "*Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past*" (Deuteronomy 32:7). Writing about Diyandi is not only an act of remembrance, but also of transmission.

For students and educators at SMCII, it provides a framework for integrating local heritage into curriculum, making learning more authentic and rooted in community life. For the Iligan community, it elevates their festival into academic discourse, affirming its value beyond local borders. For scholars of culture and pedagogy, it offers a Global South case study that enriches comparative festival studies. And for future professionals, it demonstrates how decolonization, resilience, solidarity, and ethical responsibility can be learned not only in the classrooms but through cultural practice.

The contribution of this essay extends beyond Iligan. For the community, it strengthens pride and continuity, affirming Diyandi as a mirror of identity and resilience. For the world, it situates Diyandi within global cultural relevance, showing how a local festival can be a living classroom, a model for integrating intangible heritage into education. As one Iligan elder expressed, "*Diyandi is our way of remembering who we are, even when the city changes.*" In this way, the festival becomes not only Iligan's story but part of the world's archive of cultural wisdom.

Thus, the act of writing this essay is in itself a form of cultural stewardship. It preserves the voices of the past, amplifies the lessons of the present, and offers them to the global community as testimony that festivals are not only celebrations but archives of knowledge, pedagogy, and resilience.

The story of the Diyandi Festival is inseparable from the story of Iligan itself. It began as a ritual of devotion and thanksgiving among the city's early communities, later woven into Catholic veneration of St. Michael the Archangel. Over time, this blending of indigenous practice and colonial influence gave rise to a celebration that is both local and universal. Wendt (1998) reminds us that fiestas in the Philippines were shaped by colonial culture, yet communities reinterpreted them to express their own identity. Diyandi is one such reappropriation: what was

once a ritual confined to devotion has become Iligan's city festival, a marker of continuity and adaptation.

Tiatco (2019) describes Philippine festivals as ritualized performances of devotion and community. They are not simply spectacles but enactments of collective identity. Diyandi embodies this idea. Through dance, music, and offerings, Iliganons enact values of solidarity, spirituality, and resilience. The rhythm of the festival echoes the Biblical reminder that "*There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens*" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). For Iligan, Diyandi is that season, it's a time to gather, to remember, and to reaffirm who the Iliganons are.

Local voices capture this continuity with warmth and clarity. One local resident recalls, "*We danced Diyandi long before the city grew tall buildings. It was our way of telling the world that Iligan is more than industry, it is spirit.*" A student from SMCII adds a more personal reflection: "*I feel proud when I join Diyandi because I carry both my family's faith and my city's story in every step I take.*" These words remind us that Diyandi is not only history written in books or rituals preserved in archives. It is lived experience, passed on through memory, movement, and devotion.

Seen this way, the historical and cultural background of Diyandi is not just about origins. It is about how a community reclaims its past, reshapes it in the present, and offers it to the future as a living pedagogy. This prepares the ground for understanding Diyandi not only as a festival but as a pedagogical archive, a kind of archive that teaches Iliganons, and by extension, how culture can be both memory and instruction.

Theoretically, the Diyandi Festival rests on three pillars: ritual theory, pedagogy, and heritage studies. Each of these perspectives helps illuminate why Diyandi is more than a spectacle and how it functions as a living archive of meaning.

Ritual theory, it particularly look into Victor Turner's concepts of liminality and *communitas* that provides a lens for seeing Diyandi as a transformative space. In the liminal moment of the festival, ordinary boundaries dissolve, and participants experience a sense of unity that transcends social divisions. This is not simply entertainment but a profound enactment of community. On the other hand, Tiatco (2019) reinforces this view by describing Philippine festivals as ritualized performances of devotion and gathering. His analysis shows that festivals are not passive traditions but active performances of identity, where devotion is embodied and community is reaffirmed. Diyandi, in this sense, becomes a ritual pedagogy, it's teaching through enactment rather than instruction.

Pedagogy enters the framework by recognizing that festivals transmit values and lessons. Paulo Freire's idea of dialogic learning resonates here: knowledge is not imposed but lived, shared, and performed. Diyandi teaches resilience through its endurance, solidarity through its collective dance, and spirituality through its devotion. A student from SMCII expressed this in simple terms: "*When I dance in Diyandi, I learn what it means to belong. It is not taught in class—it is felt in the rhythm.*"

A teacher from SMCII adds another layer: *“I see my students learning more about community in one festival than in a semester of lectures.”* This single observation captures the heart of the argument. Festivals like Diyandi are not only cultural events but pedagogical spaces where lessons are lived.

Further, heritage studies situate Diyandi within global frameworks of preservation and transmission. UNESCO’s intangible heritage discourse emphasizes that practices like festivals are vital cultural resources, deserving recognition and safeguarding. Diyandi fits this framing: it is intangible yet deeply formative, a heritage that continues to shape Iligan’s identity while offering lessons to the wider world.

With this, these theoretical perspectives covering ritual theory, pedagogy, and heritage studies will allow us to see Diyandi as a festival that transforms, teaches, and preserves. It is not only a cultural performance but a pedagogical archive, one that bridges local devotion with global heritage discourse.

These ideas would tell us that Diyandi Festival is not only a celebration of Iligan’s devotion to St. Michael but also a shared expression of pride among the city’s tri-people: the Maranaos, the Christians, and the Lumads. Each community brings its own rhythm, color, and meaning to the festival, making it a true convergence of Iligan’s diverse heritage. The Christians highlight their devotion through liturgical rituals and the descent of the patron saint’s image. The Maranaos contribute their artistry in dance and music, weaving Islamic cultural threads into the fabric of the celebration. The Lumads, with their ancestral traditions, remind the city of its indigenous roots and the resilience of its earliest communities.

This participation is not symbolic; it is totally lived. As this essay was woven into one final piece, the author cannot settle his thoughts into one unified paper output by not remembering one Maranao youth who shared during one of the informal conversations during the festival who said, *“I dance in Diyandi because it shows that our culture belongs here too.”* A Lumad elder reflected, *“When we join the festival, we carry the voice of our ancestors into the city streets.”* And a Christian teacher at SMCII added, *“I see my students learning that Iligan is strongest when all three peoples stand together.”*

These voices humanize the festival, showing that Diyandi is not just a ritual or performance but a collective act of belonging. It is a moment when Iligan’s tri-people take pride in their shared city, affirming that diversity is not a challenge but a strength. In this way, Diyandi becomes a pedagogical archive that teaches resilience through unity, solidarity through participation, and spirituality through shared devotion. It is Iligan’s way of telling the world that identity is richest when it is plural, and that heritage is most powerful when it is lived together.

Iligan’s urban identity has always been tested by its realities. Recent flood brought by typhoon “Basyang” in February 5, 2026 has repeatedly threatened its communities, while modernization and industrial expansion have reshaped its landscape. Yet the Diyandi Festival continues to stand as a cultural response, reminding the city that resilience is not only about infrastructure but also about spirit. It affirms that Iligan is more than its factories and floodplains; it is a community bound together by devotion and heritage.

Magpantay et al. in 2014 show how festivals in Batangas strengthen social cohesion, creating spaces where people reaffirm their ties to one another. Diyandi parallels this effect in Iligan, offering a cultural anchor amid urban change. Gonzales (2017) highlights the cultural and economic benefits of festivals, noting how they bring livelihood and pride to communities. While these benefits are undeniable, Diyandi's deeper significance lies in pedagogy as it teaches Iliganons how to endure challenges together, how to find meaning in adversity, and how to transform hardship into celebration.

UNESCO's framework for intangible cultural heritage emphasizes that practices like Diyandi are vital resources, deserving recognition and safeguarding. By situating Diyandi within this global discourse, Iligan affirms that its local heritage is part of a larger human story. The local government has also embraced the festival, supporting its organization and promotion as both a cultural and educational event. Their involvement ensures that Diyandi is not only preserved but continually renewed, bridging the past with the present.

A Michaelite student living near the riverbanks in Brgy. Tambacan once said, *"Even when the floods come, we still prepare for Diyandi. It is our way of telling ourselves that we can rise again."*

A young worker from the local government added, *"I join the festival because it reminds me that Iligan is not only about machines and work, it is about people and faith."* These reflections show that Diyandi is not an escape from urban realities but a cultural response to them.

In this way, Diyandi strengthens Iligan's urban identity. It transforms vulnerability into decolonization, resilience, modernization into solidarity, and everyday struggle into collective pride. It's worth mentioning that the Philippines has been colonized by different foreign entities but with the support of UNESCO's heritage vision and the local government's commitment, the festival teaches that resilience is not only about surviving floods or adapting to industry but about remembering who the community is, and celebrating that memory together.

From the realities of Iligan's decolonization, resilience, and identity, the discussion naturally turns to Diyandi's niche and novelty. What sets this festival apart is not its capacity to draw tourists or generate revenue, but its role as pedagogy and curricular archive. It is celebrated, yes, but more importantly, it is studied, interpreted, and integrated into the learning process in the local context.

Punzalan et al. (2025) emphasize how festivals often serve as tourism drivers, creating visibility and livelihood for communities. Diyandi, however, distinguishes itself by focusing on pedagogy rather than economics. Its novelty lies in the way it becomes a living classroom, transmitting values of decolonization, resilience, solidarity, and spirituality while also serving as a cultural text for academic reflection.

SMCII has been central in supporting this framing. The institution has woven Diyandi into its curriculum, encouraging students to analyze the festival as archive, to reflect on its lessons, and to connect it with broader discourses of heritage and identity. This support ensures that Diyandi is not only preserved through performance but also sustained through scholarship.

A teacher at SMCII expressed this commitment simply by saying: *“We do not only join Diyandi; we make it part of our class discussion so that students see culture as knowledge, not just celebration.”* That statement captures the festival’s niche. Diyandi is not just Iligan’s cultural pride but also its educational resource, a festival that becomes archive, archive that becomes curriculum, and curriculum that becomes lived pedagogy.

In this way, Diyandi’s novelty rests in its dual role. It is both a festival of devotion and a curricular text. By situating itself within pedagogy rather than economics, it contributes to Iligan’s identity in ways that tourism alone cannot achieve, offering the community and the wider world a model of how culture can be preserved, taught, and lived.

From Iligan’s decolonization, resilience, and identity, Diyandi’s meaning expands into its global cultural relevance, showing how a local festival speaks to wider debates on heritage, pedagogy, and survival in the Global South. It is not confined to Iligan’s streets but resonates with global discourses on resilience and identity.

Again, Eslit (2024) situates cultural practices within globalization and post pandemic identity, emphasizing how traditions negotiate modern pressures while holding on to roots. Diyandi embodies this negotiation, offering resilience as lived pedagogy by teaching solidarity and spirituality through ritual performance rather than abstract discourse. In this way, Iligan’s festival becomes a Global South voice, contributing to conversations about how communities endure and adapt without losing their cultural foundations.

Here, the research of Montes and Ravalo (1995) remind us that Philippine festivals are tied to socio economic development and policy. Diyandi fits within this national framework but distinguishes itself by emphasizing pedagogy over economics. While many festivals are framed as tourism or livelihood projects, Diyandi insists on its role as archive and curriculum, showing how culture itself can be a tool for education and identity formation.

Furthermore, Punzalan et al. (2025) highlight how Philippine festivals are often promoted as tourism drivers, using strategies such as extending durations, digital platforms, and cultural storytelling to attract visitors. Diyandi, however, differentiates itself further by resisting reduction to spectacle. While it inevitably brings tourists and livelihood, its deeper novelty lies in SMCII’s integration of the festival into academic programs. Students are not only participants but interpreters, treating Diyandi as a cultural text that sustains values and identity. This contrast reinforces Diyandi’s global relevance: it participates in the Philippine festival landscape yet contributes something unique as it shows a model of how festivals can be an archives of pedagogy, not just as engines of tourism.

Voices from Iligan actualize this discourse. A teacher at SMCII remarked, *“Tourists may see Diyandi as spectacle, but our students see it as lesson.”* With this, a Lumad elder even cited that, *“We dance not only for Iligan but to show the world that our heritage survives.”* These reflections show how Diyandi bridges local practice with global meaning.

Thus, Diyandi's global cultural relevance lies in its ability to speak from the Global South, to contribute to resilience discourse, and to situate Iligan within wider cultural debates. It is both local and global, both archive and pedagogy, both memory and future for everyone to cherish.

Indeed, in the research of Gloria in 2024, he underscores how festivals anchor community identity, a point that Magpantay et al. (2014) also reinforce by showing how celebrations strengthen cohesion. Gonzales in 2017 adds the economic dimension, but Gadaza in his study in 2022 reframes festivals as curricular resources, aligning directly with SMCII's practice of embedding Diyandi into pedagogy. Wendt in 1998 and Tiatco in 2019 both argue that festivals function as cultural pedagogy, validating Diyandi's role as archive and curriculum.

Likewise, Montes and Ravalo (1995) situate festivals within Philippine development policy, reminding us that they intersect with socio economic planning. Also, Punzalan et al. in 2025 highlight how festivals are often promoted as tourism drivers, yet Diyandi resists being reduced to spectacle, insisting instead on its educational role. The study of Eslit in 2024 situates Diyandi within globalization and post pandemic identity, showing how Iligan's festival contributes to decolonization and resilience discourse.

With all this, these voices present Diyandi as more than a local celebration. It is a pedagogical archive that challenges the tourism driven framing of festivals, a cultural response that strengthens identity, and a Global South voice that insists culture is not only for display but for learning, survival, and continuity. This synthesis of Gloria's identity, Wendt's pedagogy, Tiatco's performance, Gadaza's curriculum, Eslit's globalization, Montes and Ravalo's policy, and Punzalan et al.'s tourism positions Diyandi as both archive and voice, both local heritage and global relevance.

Reflecting in all this, the human dimension of Diyandi is most visible in how SMCII students embody its lessons. Their participation is not limited to performance but extends into lived practice, where the festival becomes a formative experience. Through dance, ritual, and study, teachers and students internalize values of resilience, solidarity, and spirituality, carrying these lessons into their personal and academic lives. This humble voice ensures that Diyandi is not only preserved but continually reinterpreted by each generation.

Mesana and De Guzman in 2022 describe this phenomenon as "*happiologies*" in community festivals, where joy, meaning, and repeat participation create enduring bonds between individuals and their cultural heritage. Applied to Diyandi, this insight explains why students return year after year: not simply to perform, but to reaffirm identity and to experience the continuity of tradition as personal narrative. Their repeated involvement transforms Diyandi from spectacle into pedagogy, from ritual into a living archive.

In this way, the reflection on Diyandi highlights its dual role. It is both a communal celebration and a personal journey, where SMCII students embody the festival's lessons in resilience and identity. The intellectual voices of Gloria on community, Gadaza on curriculum, Eslit on globalization, and Mesana and De Guzman on happiologies are seen to converge the humanistic idea and show that Diyandi is not only a cultural text but also a lived pedagogy, sustained through human participation and meaning.

Summing them all up, Diyandi Festival stands as decolonizing concept, ritual pedagogy, heritage practice, curricular archive, teaching resilience, solidarity, and living spirituality through embodied performance and academic integration at SMCII. It resists being reduced to tourism spectacle, instead asserting its role as archive and curriculum, situating Iligan within national development debates and global scholarly discourse through Gloria's insights on identity, Gadaza's curriculum perspective, Wendt and Tiatco's pedagogy, Montes and Ravalo's policy context, Punzalan et al.'s tourism analysis, and Eslit's globalization lens. Teachers and students themselves embody these in their lessons, echoing Mesana and De Guzman's notion of happiologies, where joy and repeat participation sustain meaning and identity. Diyandi therefore emerges not only as Iligan's pride but as a Global South voice in resilience discourse, and the imperative now is for educators, scholars, and cultural leaders to safeguard, study, and integrate Diyandi more deeply into teaching and research, ensuring its lessons of continuity and survival are projected into the world's future.

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